

## Christian Life

### The Song of Christmas.

FREDERICK CHARLES COWPER.

Hast thou not heard, on stilly night,  
A song more sweet than other songs,  
As tho the morning stars so bright  
Would blend their voice with seraph tongues?  
That was the holy Christmas-tide,  
When the pure crystals of the frost  
Shone in the moonlit country-side,  
Like footprints of the angel host.  
Then was the carol passing sweet;  
It struck the sympathetic cord  
Where thought, desire, and rythm meet,  
And perfect melody afford.  
Methought that God was very good;  
I did desire Him in my heart:  
Then music burst upon my mood,  
And this attuned hope's better part.  
I felt the need of saving grace  
Just as the old world felt the need;  
And I believe God loved our race—  
And no rude blast could shake my creed.  
Then did I hear the herald's voice  
Proclaim the holy Saviour's birth—  
News that should make mankind rejoice.  
Transforming sorrow into mirth.  
Anon rolled forth the song again,  
"To God be glory in the height,  
Peace on the earth, goodwill to men"—  
A diapason strong and bright.  
It touched the passion of my soul,  
It gave to hope celestial strength,  
It held my heart in sweet control,  
And lit the flame of faith at length.  
Then ring out clear, ye Christmas bells!  
And let the carol echo far—  
A peerless symphony that tells  
The advent of our Guiding star!

—Living Church.

### UNIVERSAL PRAISE BELONGS TO THE LORD

S. KIEHL.

"I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge  
and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.  
The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."  
Therefore, "Bless the Lord, O my soul and  
all that is within me, bless his holy name.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not  
all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities;  
who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction;  
who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;  
who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

Seven times a day do I praise thee because  
of thy righteous judgements Ps. 119:164.  
"O God, who is like unto thee! Thy mercy from everlasting to everlasting. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness,  
and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Let everything that hath breath  
praise the Lord Ps. 150:6. Dear reader,  
that includes you and me. The invitation is all inclusive. "Praise our God, all ye his servants,  
and ye that fear him, both small and great.

Oh Lord, may "our mouths be filled with thy praise and with thy honor" all our days.

### CHRISTMAS

REV. J. M. TOMBAUGH

Of all the days of the year, there is not one so rich in happy memories, not one so gladly hailed and so universally celebrated as Christmas day. The very name awakens in young and old alike the liveliest and most pleasurable emotions, for it suggests not only mirth and festivities and good cheer, but it keeps ever fresh and new in our hearts that same holy joy which inspired the angels to sing at the nativity.

This is the day when, all over the world, the glad Christmas chimes are ringing, and the people of every nation and clime, of every color and language where Christ is known are thronging into the churches to hear again the story of the birth of the infant Redeemer. Multiplied thousands of pure childish voices, almost rivaling in sweetness the music of the angels, are chanting to-day the praises of the Babe of Bethlehem. Wherever the Gospel is known the praises of Jesus are sung and his birth day is celebrated. And it is no wonder that it is so, for the event which the day commemorates is the most joyful in all the world's history.

This world is the stage upon which have been enacted many strange and wonderful and happy events, but not one half so strange and wonderful and happy as this. If the King of England, or the Czar of Russia were to come to our country, what an amount of interest such visitors would excite! Everybody would be eager to see them and to shake hands with them, and to talk with them would be esteemed a great privilege. But suppose we were to have a visitor some day from one of the far off planets, from Jupiter or Neptune; the whole country would go wild with excitement. Curiosity, if nothing else, over so wonderful an event would lead us to give him a reception such as no popular hero ever received. With what eagerness would we listen to the story he would have to tell of the undreamed of things of another world than ours! Wonderful as such a visit as that would be, we celebrate on Christmas day an event much more wonderful; it is the visit, not of a mortal like ourselves, but of the blessed and holy Son of God. Isn't it wonderful that he, so great and holy, should have his throne in heaven; the adoration of angels, the society of the pure and good, and that he should come to earth and suffer weariness and poverty and pain, and that he should at least willingly die what men regarded as a reproachful death? It is truly most wonderful. But our wonder is changed to love and gratitude when we remember that it was for us he suffered all this. He came to make this sad old world of ours brighter and happier and better. He came as God's Christmas gift to a hopeless unhappy people, and set all the bells of hope and joy a-ringing in their hearts again. For this reason Christmas is everywhere recognized as a happy time; a time when we ought to put all ill-feeling and bad temper and ugly dispositions and selfishness out of our hearts,

and to cultivate feelings of kindness and friendliness toward all men, and gratitude and thanksgiving to God.

The people of different nations celebrate the day in different ways, but tho their customs differ, the *spirit* of Christmas is everywhere the same; it is, "Glory to God and good will to men." The making of gifts to our friends in grateful remembrance of God's gift of his Son Jesus to us, is a custom which allows us to show our "good will in a practical way."

The boys and girls in Germany get their Christmas gifts off of a Christmas tree; and high up in the branches of the tree there is usually a doll or image which represents the Christ child. Very early in the morning the tree is lighted by candles, and the whole family stand around it and sing a Christmas hymn. The children believe that St. Nicholas visits all their homes the week before Christmas to learn which of them have been good enough to receive his gifts. We need not smile at their superstition, because in our own country there are thousands of children who believe in Santa Claus just as firmly as the German children believe in their St. Nicholas.

In France they use a manger instead of a tree, and they light it with candles and decorate it with flowers on Christmas morning. The custom is a beautiful one, because the manger represents the lowly birth-place of the infant Redeemer.

In Normay the people are not content with showing their good will to one another only, they let their kindness extend even to the birds, and they put a sheaf of wheat on the barn or on the top of a pole so that the birds may have good cheer on that day too.

In Holland the children set their wooden shoes by the chimney side the night before Christmas, in the hope that Kris Kingle will come down the chimney and leave a present in each shoe as a reminder of his visit.

In Russia there is a curious tradition that when the wise men were going to Bethlehem to find Jesus, they saw a woman at work and said to her, "Come with us, for we go to worship the new born Savior." She answered that she would when she finished her work, but when her work was done and she was ready to go, the wise men were gone, the star had faded and she never could find the Christ child.

The tradition tells how she is searching for him yet, and that for his sake she takes care of all his children. She hopes to find, among the children she warms and feeds, the Holy Child she neglected years ago, but she is always disappointed. The children believe that is she who fills their stocking and dresses the Christmas tree, and on Christmas morning they are awakened by the cry, "Behold the Bahoushka!" but she always vanishes before they can catch a glimpse of her.

Many of the Christmas customs, observed not only in foreign countries but in our own, are wrong because they are kept up by deception and falsehood. The true Christmas